

## Community resources

[Follow us on Twitter](#) [Check our Reddit](#) [Twitter this](#) [Digg this page](#) [Contact us on IRC](#)

*courage is contagious*

## Viewing cable 06MANAGUA813, CHONTALES, NICARAGUA: CALL FOR UNITY AND

If you are new to these pages, please read an introduction on the [structure of a cable](#) as well as how to [discuss them](#) with others. See also the [FAQs](#)

### Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

### Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#06MANAGUA813**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
<a href="#">06MANAGUA813</a>	<a href="#">2006-04-11 22:44</a>	<a href="#">2011-08-30 01:44</a>	<a href="#">CONFIDENTIAL</a>	<a href="#">Embassy Managua</a>

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-30/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2758456.aspx>  
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-30/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2758467.aspx>  
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-30/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2758468.aspx>  
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-30/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2758464.aspx>  
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/4103/la-embusa-y-el-gabinete-de-ortega>  
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/4104/d-rsquo-escoto-en-onu-ldquo-un-desafio-de-ortega-a-ee-uu-rdquo>  
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/4102/estrada-y-la-ldquo-doble-cara-rdquo-ante-ee-uu>  
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/3966/la-ldquo-injerencia-rdquo-de-ee-uu-en-el-2006>  
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-23/Mundo/Relacionados/Mundo2758764.aspx>  
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-23/Mundo/NotaPrincipal/Mundo2758753.aspx>  
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/4041/millones-de-dolares-sin-control-y-a-discrecion>  
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/4040/la-ldquo-injerencia-rdquo-de-venezuela-en-2006>  
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/4047/rodrigo-barreto-enviado-de-ldquo-vacaciones-rdquo>  
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-16/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2757239.aspx>  
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-16/Mundo/NotaPrincipal/Mundo2746658.aspx>  
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-16/Mundo/Relacionados/Mundo2757244.aspx>  
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-16/Mundo/Relacionados/Mundo2746673.aspx>  
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/3991/dra-yadira-centeno-desmiente-cable-diplomatico-eeuu>  
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/3968/pellas-pronostico-a-eeuu-victoria-de-ortega-en-2006>  
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/3967/barreto-era-ldquo-fuente-confiable-rdquo-para-eeuu>

VZCZCXYZ0001  
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHMU #0813/01 1012244  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
R 112244Z APR 06  
FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5944  
INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAGUA 000813

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR WHA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/06/2016  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [EINV](#) [SOCI](#) [NU](#)  
SUBJECT: CHONTALES, NICARAGUA: CALL FOR UNITY AND  
MONTEALEGRE OPPORTUNITY IN A LIBERAL COMMUNITY (SECOND OF  
TWO)

REF: MANAGUA 721

Classified By: AMBASSADOR PAUL TRIVELLI FOR REASONS 1.4 (a & b)

11. (SBU) Summary: While baseball is Nicaragua's national sport, it is surpassed by politics in the Department of Chontales. Emotions are still raw in this cattle raising region where misguided economic policy, Contra attacks and Sandinista reprisals devastated the countryside in the 1980's. During a March 9 visit, ECONOFF encountered a wide variety of opinions about how best to defeat the Sandinista Front Party (FSLN) in November, but uniform hostility to Sandinista leader Daniel Ortega and skepticism about the democratic bonafides of Sandinista dissident Herty Lewites. In meetings with politicians, business owners, and cattle ranchers - and even chats with waiters and hotel staff - Chontelenos distinguished themselves for being politically savvy. The oft repeated themes were fear and loathing of the FSLN, a high regard for PLC dissident Eduardo Montealegre, and a desire for Liberal unity. End Summary.

Chontales Politics - No Love For Local Boy Ortega  
- - - - -

12. (U) Until the 1990's, Chontales had traditionally been a bastion of Conservative Party (PC) Support. The domination of political and economic life by owners of large estates was disrupted by the Sandinista Revolution of 1979. In the 1980's, these already "conservative" leaders became strong supporters of the anti-Sandinista insurgent (Contra) forces as the FSLN's property reform program resulted in the confiscation of great tracts of land. Contras were also active in Chontales, constantly attempting to disrupt traffic on a highway that brought needed supplies to the revolutionary government via the river port of El Rama, which enjoys access to the Atlantic Ocean. The Sandinistas governed this center of opposition with a heavy hand, earning the eternal enmity of much of the population - including many of the rural poor whose interests the FSLN were theoretically representing. Further alienating Chontales from the FSLN is the fact that this region had been one of the most prosperous in Nicaragua prior to the Revolution and was devastated by the war and land reforms that left a great deal of the previously productive land idle.

13. (U) After Nicaragua's emergence from a decade of revolutionary leadership, the bulk of former PC and Liberal Party members formed the PLC to counter the FSLN. As a result, the PLC has replaced the PC as the dominant political party in Chontales. Even so, several current PLC members told ECONOFF that they really still consider themselves to be Conservatives. Alternatively, the two PC members with whom we spoke admitted that they usually wind up voting for the PLC candidate as the most viable choice to defeat the FSLN.

Despite the fact that FSLN leader Daniel Ortega is from La Libertad, Chontales, he is a despised figure in this department, and his hometown is run by the PLC.

#### Cattle Ranchers Supportive of Montealegre But Wary of Liberal Disunity

14. (SBU) Since 40% of all cattle in this cattle raising country are found in Chontales, the political views of cattle ranchers are key to understanding the region. To that end, ECONOFF held meetings with members of the Chontales Cattlemen's Association (AGC) and the Santo Tomas Cattlemen's Cooperative (CGST). Three of the four leaders of AGC identified themselves as being Liberal and the fourth Conservative. The CGST meeting was attended by two PLC members, a Vamos Con Eduardo/Nicaraguan Liberal Alliance (ALN) member, and a PC member. To a person, these beef and dairy sector leaders were hostile to the FSLN and Daniel Ortega. They also challenged the democratic bonafides of Sandinista dissident Herty Lewites, calling his candidacy a "hoax." Furthermore, they opined, Lewites has surrounded himself with hard-line leftists so he should not be trusted. Although some participants admitted knowing a few people who said they plan to vote for Lewites, they saw no evidence of any Herty 2006 campaign apparatus in Chontales.

15. (SBU) The cattle ranchers spoke favorably of Eduardo Montealegre. They liked the fact that he represents government transparency and economic modernism; they acknowledged that the corruption of Arnolando Aleman damages the country and enables the FSLN. On the other hand, the examples of the March 5 Atlantic Coast regional elections and the municipal elections of 2004, give these hard-line anti-Sandinistas pause. Several said that if they unite the

Liberals will win, but that disunity could enable Daniel Ortega to slip into the Presidential Palace with 35-40% of the vote. The ranchers also spoke favorably of Jose Rizo (who had not yet been named as the PLC presidential candidate) and APRE presidential pre-candidate Jose Alvarado. Several cattlemen opined said that Montealegre needs to visit their department more often and that he suffers from an image of being cold and elitist.

16. (C) There was disagreement among the cattlemen about whether Aleman's corruption was bad enough to justify abandoning the PLC. The consensus view was that if Montealegre is sufficiently ahead in the polls prior to election day, then they and their fellow Chontelenos would likely vote for him. On the other hand, if it looks close, the cattlemen said that many Liberals would hold their noses and vote for the PLC candidate to prevent Ortega from becoming president. Hilario Vargas, former mayor of Santo Tomas and an ALN member, said that the Atlantic Coast election results (in which the FSLN was able to win many seats despite having fewer votes than the Liberal bloc) caused him to think that Liberal unity might be even more important than his desire to end the Alemanista culture of corruption. In the end, about a third said they would support Montealegre no matter what, a third said they would support Montealegre only if Ortega had no chance of winning, and a third were unsure or unwilling to say. None of the ranchers defended Aleman on his own terms. The two ranchers who are members of the PC said that they will vote for Montealegre, as his party has formed an alliance with the PC.

#### Vamos Con Eduardo/ALN Taking Over the PLC Infrastructure in Chontales

17. (C) Leaders of Vamos Con Eduardo/ALN in Chontales are enthusiastic about their candidate's prospects in the Department. All of these Montealegre supporters have long histories as PLC activists and leaders. One reason for their enthusiasm is their claim that they are taking over the infrastructure of the PLC from the inside. Elman Urbina,

former PLC municipal council president of Juigalpa and Lombardo Madriz, a Juigalpa city councilman and ex-chief of the PLC in Juigalpa illustrate this phenomenon. These ALN members reported that many PLC council members, mayors, party functionaries and election officials are members of both organizations simultaneously and plan to use PLC resources to benefit Montealegre. They also noted that Montealegre has five campaign centers in Chontales. Comment: To down play its poor performance in public opinion polls the PLC argues is that it has superior organizational power to mobilize voters and defend election results compared to the newly cobbled together Montealegre organization. If the apparent take over of the PLC structure by Montealegre's people is happening in other parts of Nicaragua as well - - and EMBOFF's have witnessed a similar phenomenon elsewhere - - the PLC may be in worse shape than it admits. End Comment.

18. (SBU) ALN meeting participants said that they appreciate USG calls for free and fair elections, transparency in government, and an end to the caudillo politics of Aleman. To them the leaders of the PLC do not represent the true feelings of the voters. They see the PLC as having been "kidnapped" by a few leaders and asked that the Embassy be even more outspoken in our opposition to Aleman's domination of the PLC and the PLC-FSLN power sharing pact. Other insights included sharing the view that the Rizo would be the strongest PLC candidate in Chontales, and they incorrectly predicted that Aleman would not permit Rizo's nomination.

Aleman Loyalist Says PLC Victory Necessary to Defeat FSLN, While Defending Pact With FSLN  
- - - - -

19. (C) Marcio Gutierrez, the Departmental Electoral Council (CED) president for Chontales repeated familiar PLC bromides and shared a few surprising confessions. Gutierrez admitted that the PLC had learned a lot from the Mexican PRI as to how to steal elections, although he did not admit to being personally involved in such fraud. He argued that only the PLC has the organizational capacity to defeat the Sandinistas, while also defending the PLC pact with the FSLN as the "only way to get anything done." Gutierrez rejected ALN claims that they are well organized in Chontales and that Montealegre is a popular figure in the department. He shared his belief that Jose Rizo has the best chance of winning in Chontales (Note: This comment was made before Rizo was nominated by the PLC. End Note.). Gonzalez did not defend Aleman's criminal activity, but it was a sore spot - - he

appeared to tear up on two occasions when the subject arose.

110. (C) Gutierrez argued that Aleman's leadership is still strong and the USG should stop denying it. In his view, the Embassy should not interfere in the internal politics of Nicaragua when it comes to opposing the Aleman-dominated PLC, although we should do whatever we can to keep the Sandinistas from winning. He did confess that he thinks the PLC would be better served if Aleman were replaced by another leader. Gutierrez remarked that his wife had been denied a tourist visa in November 2005 and that he believed it was because of his political loyalties. (Comment: According to consular sources, she was not refused a visa for political reasons. However, the fact that Gutierrez thinks his wife was refused because of his political allegiances, is evidence that the USG policy of revoking visas from corrupt politicians has struck a cord. End Comment.)

Voting Patterns Show Liberal Strength in Numbers and FSLN Strength in Organization  
- - - - -

111. (U) In 1990 the National Opposition Alliance (UNO) won with 80% of the votes in Chontales. In the 2001 presidential election the anti-Sandinista vote was 72% with the PLC gaining 53,439 votes, the PC 1,872 and the FSLN 21,771. In the 2004 municipal elections, a low voter turn out, a divided center-right, and alleged electoral malfeasance did allow the

FSLN to capture mayorships in Juigalpa (the departmental capital), Acoypa, and Santo Tomas. As a whole, the anti-Sandinista vote was still 70% in Chontales, but the center-right was splintered into eight parties. The comparison between the PLC and FSLN was 21,113 votes to 16,774, with 17,386 votes going to other center-right parties.

¶12. (SBU) COMMENT: These figures show that 16,812 fewer center-right voters cast ballots in the 2004 municipal elections than in the last presidential election, compared to only 658 fewer FSLN voters. The FSLN is clearly more organized and disciplined in Chontales than its competitors, as is true throughout Nicaragua. The Sandinistas' tactical advantage in 2006, therefore, would come from a divided and/or reduced turnout from their competitors since the FSLN has mastered the science of getting its voters to the polls.

¶13. (SBU) Chontales offers a treasure trove of voters for anti-Sandinista candidates in the 2006 national elections. A united center-right would rack up big numbers. Similarly, the good will that Eduardo Montealegre has built in the department should give him an opportunity to take advantage of the seemingly genuine desire for good government in Chontales. His biggest challenge is to convince these voters that he can win.

TRIVELLI